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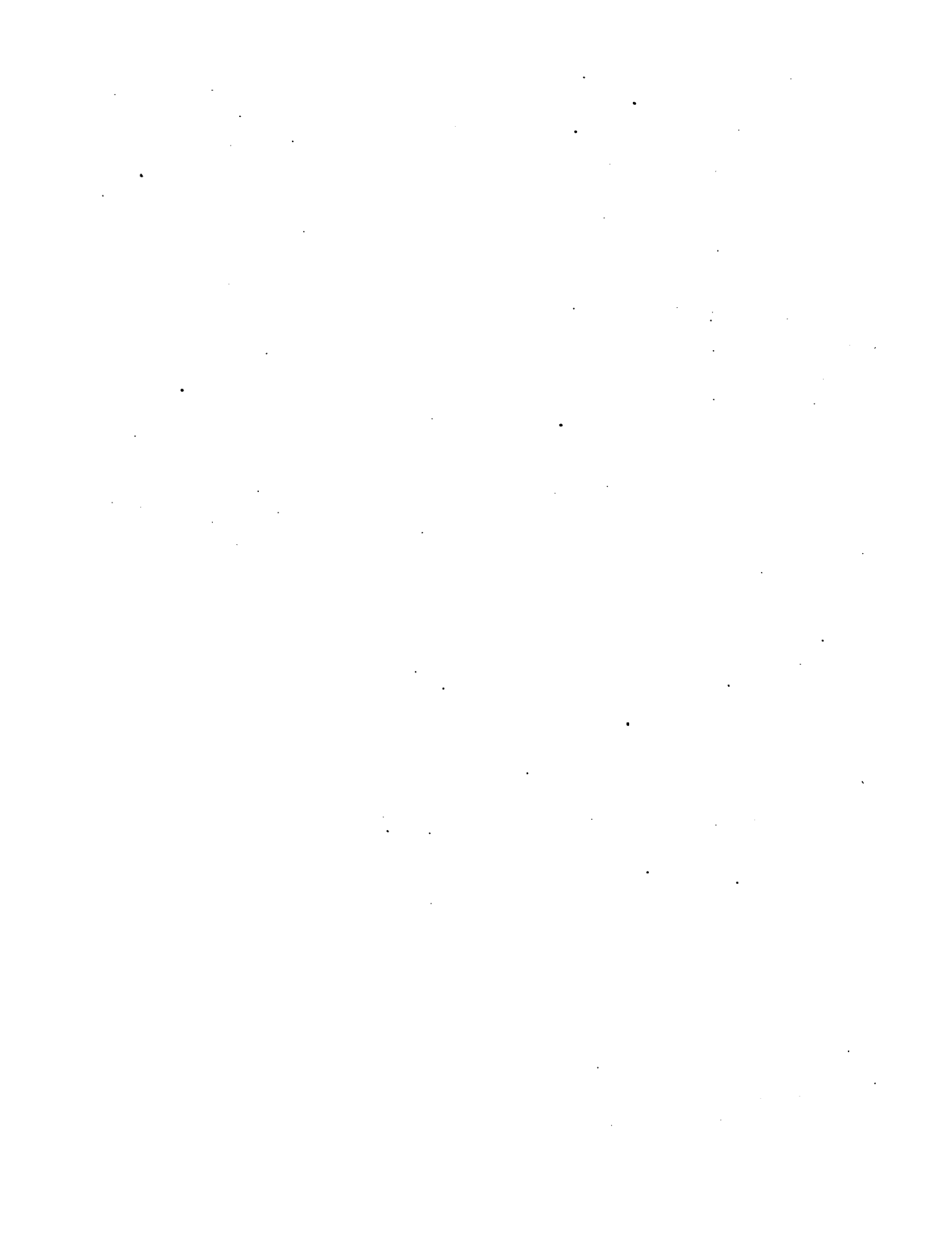
SNOW



DREAMS

SNOW DREAMS.





EDINBURGH:
PRINTED BY M'FARLANE AND ERSKINE,
ST JAMES SQUARE.

Dedicated

TO

The Bairns.

—:O:—

*"Ye are better than all the ballads
That ever were sung or said,
For ye are living poems,
And all the rest are dead."*

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SNOW DREAMS.

I.

THE NORTH WIND AND THE SNOW.

IT was evening, and winter time. The children were gathered around the parlour fire. Outside the cozy home the North Wind shouted and the Snow fell fast.

"Christmas will soon be here," said one child.

"I wonder why the snow comes at Christmas time?" murmured another.

"I don't like the sound of the winter wind," cried a third.

"I dreamt that the snow-flakes were fairies," a little girl whispered; and her brother added, "I believe they are angels' feathers."

"Some one told me that the North Wind does a great deal of harm," exclaimed a big boy.

"When the North Wind doth blow,
Then we shall have Snow,"

sang a merry lassie ; and a merrier lad chimed in—

“And that, you must know,
Makes one's spirits quite low.”

“How horrid are the Wind and the Snow,” said all the children together:

Then father and mother looked at each other, and smiled.

“*I* like the wild songs of the North Wind,” said mother, softly ; and father added, “*I* think the Snow is very beautiful.”

Just then a sweet fairy voice sang outside the window :

“Like a dream I come and go,
Snow you call me, falling Snow.
Could you see with other eyes,
You would know,
That an angel from the skies
Is the Snow.”

The gentle voice of the Snow had scarcely been lost among the grasses, when the North Wind was heard, sweeping his strong fingers across his wild harp chords, and then he sang :

“Beautiful Snow, I have followed you far
From the land that lies lone 'neath the Polar Star.
I saw you descend from a winter cloud
To wrap your loved earth in a spotless shroud.
I have wooed you in darkness yet loved you long :
Ah ! tender my heart though so wild my song.”

“Yes, your song is wild, North Wind,” answered the coy Snow-spirit, “and though your bright kisses make me sparkle

for joy, yet I am just a little afraid that your wooing interferes with my duty to the dear sleeping plants of my mother earth. I came here to cover them up from the cold and the darkness, but I am afraid you are not mindful of that. When you are fondest to *me*, you are most hard-hearted to them, North Wind!"

"And some people say that *you* are cold-hearted, Snow," the North Wind answered sorrowfully.

"Is it not *you* who makes me so?" the spirit answered. "You freeze me with your breath, and your songs are so wild that I fly frightened into hollows. Why are you so rude? You are strong and brave and free. A king of winds, why be so impetuous and froward?"

"You are so beautiful, Snow, I cannot but follow you and woo you—ah, and win you, Snow!"

"Nay, not so fast! I must stay to purify the earth, to guard the flowers until the sun comes back. Can you not find some good work to do, North Wind, until the gentle spring returns?"

"And what then?" the North Wind asked, and his question shook the Snow in showers from the swaying boughs. "And what then, fair Snow?"

"Why then," she whispered tenderly, "I go to be your bride in the far, far North. Leave me to my mission now, for when the sunbeams come to carry me away your wooing will be ended, and I shall descend from the clouds into your arms, to make my home in your great ice land."

"And must I go and leave you here, to be kissed by the sunbeams and carried in their car to the clouds?"

"Even so, and yet that will bring me nearer to you again. Has it not been so with every Snow-spirit? Do we not all find a home at last in your domain?"

"Yes, yes," sang the North Wind, rejoicingly, "we woo and win at last."

Yet he lingered, sweeping his fingers over his harp chords, until the snow crystals vibrated with low-toned echoes. He lingered, for he too had a mission to earth. Rude and froward he seemed, that mighty King of Winds, but he had a warm heart, and there was work, as well as wooing, for him to do. Who can unravel the mystery of good in seeming evil? Who can trace the beneficence which follows in the path of a Storm King?

"Ah!" sang the North Wind, "people call me cruel, but if they knew——"

"Ah!" sighed the Snow, "people call me cold, but if they knew——"

"*You* are a tender spirit of mercy," said he.

"*You* are a minister of justice," said she.

"And we are the friends of earth," said both, "and our marriage song shall be:

"Could folks see with other eyes,
They would know
That the wildest winds that blow,
And the deepest drifts of snow,
Are but Blessings in disguise,
Oh, hee oh!"





II.

A STORY OF KING CHRISTMAS.

ONCE upon a time there was a high hill. I daresay it is still where it was, for hills do not often run away. This hill was always white with snow, white all over, and there were two paths upon it—one leading from the top to the bottom, the other leading from the bottom to the top. These paths were always covered with ice like glass, so smooth and slippery that you could not climb up.

You could not climb up, no more could I ; so we could never have the fun of sliding down, which would be very great fun indeed.

But once every year some one climbed up that hill ; how he managed I cannot tell. It did not seem any trouble to him ; it seemed as if he could slide up-hill just as easily as you and I can slide down.

Now, the little man who climbed the hill every year used to stand on the top of the hill and stamp three times with each foot, and say, "King Christmas, are you coming?" This little man's name was Johnnie Frost.

Once upon a time, then, Johnnie Frost went sliding up the hill. He had on a warm coat made of fur, and he had a warm cap all made of fur too ; his cap covered up nearly all

his face, you could scarcely see anything but a pair of merry blue eyes and the tip of a nose, which looked very blue too. Johnnie went up the hill one very cold morning ; he was singing all the time, for he was full of fun. When he got to the top he stamped three times with his right foot and three times with his left foot. He tried to put his two hands to his mouth, but he could not do that, they just then happened to be frozen fast to the bottom of his pockets ; so as he stamped he could only open his mouth very wide indeed and shout very loudly, " King Christmas, are you coming ? "

Then an old man lifted up his head out of the snow, just as you lift your head off your pillow when you awake, and he pushed the snow away from off him just as you push away the bed-clothes when you mean to get up ; then he sat up in the snow and began to rub his eyes, and then—very bad manners for a king—he opened his mouth a very long way and began to yawn.

" What ! has not your Majesty had sleep enough ? " said Johnnie ; " what a lazy fellow you are ! "

Now, if old King Christmas had not been the most good-natured king in all the world, I rather think he would have taken Master Johnnie in one of his great hands and thrown him down into the river at the bottom of the hill, for it was exceedingly rude to speak in such a manner to a king. But old King Christmas only rubbed his eyes still harder and opened his mouth still wider, and there he sat for quite half an hour on the top of the mountain.

"Your Majesty will rub off your royal eyelids," said Johnnie at last, "and there will then be nothing to go to sleep with next year."

"Right, my lad," said the King ; and he left off rubbing.

"Your Majesty will never get your royal mouth shut," said Johnnie again, "and you will look a dreadful fright."

"Right, my lad," answered the King ; and he left off yawning in an instant, for he remembered that if he did not take Johnnie's advice, Johnnie might freeze him stiff. But there was not much fear of that ; Johnnie would not have done it on purpose, and if he had done it by accident, all the fires which people were lighting to boil their plum-puddings would soon have made him thaw again.

"Is your Majesty ready ?" said Johnnie ; "all the little children in the world are looking for you. They have been pressing their little round noses against the cold windows for a long time looking for you, and saying, ' King Christmas, are you coming ? '"

"Little dears," said the King ; and he jumped up, and then walked along the top of the hill until he came to a great heap of white snow ; a great square house it was, with a big door made of ice.

King Christmas had no lock to his door ; he struck it with his foot a very hard blow, and it flew open in a moment. Then he walked in, and in walked Johnnie too. Oh, it was so pretty all inside the palace of King Christmas ! You should have seen the toys he had there ! There were

fifes, and fiddles, and drums, and dolls, and carts, and wooden horses, and hoops, and tops, and balls; every sort of toy in fact; and besides the toys there were pictures, and sweetmeats, and pies, and puddings, and cakes, and turkeys, and large sirloins of beef. There were coats, and furs, and gloves, and dresses, and I really cannot tell you what beside, there were so many things.

There was no window in the palace to let in the light, but there were a hundred thousand little candles, blue, and yellow, and red, and green, and white, all burning brightly; and there was holly on the walls, holly with red berries—oh, it was all so pretty!

Johnnie Frost always liked to go in and look every year; and he was never late in calling King Christmas, for he was in a hurry to see the pretty things, and that was the reason why Johnnie sang so merrily as he went up the mountain.

Old King Christmas was a very big man; he had a very large beard quite white; he had a very large head, with very long hair quite white like his beard, and he never wore a cap or hat, only a crown made of laurel, and holly, and bay, and ivy.

Besides this, King Christmas had very large pockets in his coat; they were very large indeed, and he began to fill them with all the pretty things in his palace. It seemed as if he would never finish cramming them with things of every description.

At last he had put all the pretty things into his pockets,

and he blew out the candles and went out of his palace and shut the great ice door, and left it for pretty things to grow and grow until next year. Then he trudged away. His pockets were very heavy indeed, a great weight to carry, but kind King Christmas did not mind a bit. Then he sat down on the top of the mountain at the top of one of the paths, not the one by which Johnnie Frost came up.

"Ready, my lad?" said the King.

"Ready," said Johnnie, sitting down on one foot with the other stretched out before him.

Then the King sat upon one foot in the same way, stretching out the other as Johnnie did.

"Ready?" asked the King once more.

"Ready," said Johnnie, again.

"Very well," said the King, "One—Two—Three and away!"

Down they went sliding over the path, the King first and Johnnie close behind him. The King laughed and Johnnie laughed. The King shouted "Ha! Ha!" and Johnnie shouted "Ha! Ha! Ha!" The King's long hair streamed behind him in the wind, he was sliding so fast; then Johnnie pulled his freezing hand out of his pocket and caught hold of the old King's long hair, and so they went sliding down the mountain, shouting "Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"Mind my pockets," cried the merry old King, and Johnnie minded them, and so the two went down the mountain. The dry snow flew before their feet and went pelting against all the windows, where the children were flattening their little

round noses against the glass ; and the children danced about and clapped their hands for joy and said, " Here comes King Christmas."

Then King Christmas went all over the land, knocking at every door, saying, " Any little children at home?" And if people answered " Yes," he put his hand in his pocket and pulled out some pretty things. Old King Christmas was full of fun.

Sometimes he would dress himself in a gown and a cap and bring in a fine plum-pudding.

Sometimes he would dress himself up like a postman, and take pretty things out of a letter bag.

Sometimes he looked like a railway porter.

Sometimes like a merry uncle or a kind old grandpapa ; and all the time Johnnie Frost would be peeping at him and running beside him from door to door, wishing that next year would come ; and I think that is what all the children wished too, for the last thing King Christmas heard as he went back to the mountain, was the children saying, " Will it be long till next Christmas."



III.

CHRISTMAS HERALDS.

THE Christmas Heralds come on airy winglets
To cover earth with downy plumes of snow ;
And young eyes, laughing under glossy ringlets,
Gleam gladder as they watch the white wreaths grow.

“Are they not angels clad in garb celestial?”

The children cry as softly falls each flake ;

“Yes, and they come to deck His home terrestrial,

In purest robe for Baby Jesu's sake.”

IV.

AUNTIE'S SNOW DREAMS.

THE Snow was falling silently and fast. Already it hung upon the branches like pretty night-dresses on sleepy children ; and that made Auntie think of one little child in a snow-land, who always talked about herself and her brothers as "snow-babies," because they had all been born in the winter time and under the Polar Star ! Yet the child was an English Rosebud, and Auntie knew that the strong, grand, free North Wind was painting the rose leaves a glowing crimson ; and that the pure, soft, silent, white snow-flakes had written their own stainless beauty on the spirit of the English flower. Auntie thought about the Rosebud, and the Snow, and the North Wind, until her thoughts became woven into dreams, and each dream became a snow-picture, and each picture became a snow-rhyme.

SNOW-PICTURES AND SONGS IN THE SNOW.

PICTURE I.—AN OLD MAN.

OH ho ! blinding Snow,
Let me see which way to go ;
You are cold, and I am old,
You make me shiver and tremble, Snow !

PICTURE II.—CHILDREN FALLING ON THE SNOW.

OH ho ! out in the Snow,
Over at last, I told you so !
When children pout, saying "shall go out,"
They often chance to fall down in the Snow.

PICTURE III.—CHIMNEY SWEEPS.

OH ho ! Sweeps in the Snow,
Don't their funny faces show ;
Our fires must blaze on these cold days,
And that brings the chimney sweeps out in the Snow.

PICTURE IV.—A LITTLE STREET ARAB.

OH ho ! rags in the Snow !
That will never do, oh no, no !
She is shivering, see, and warm clothes have we—
Who'll help a little cold child in the Snow ?

PICTURE V.—BIRDIES ON A FENCE.

OH ho ! birds in the Snow,
Four little sparrows perched all in a row ;
They are singing "tweet, tweet, we have nothing to eat"—
Who has a crumb for a bird in the Snow ?

PICTURE VI.—SNOWDROPS.

OH ho ! under the Snow,
Cover me up and I shall grow ;
I shall come again without spot or stain,
Bright and white like the bright white Snow.

PICTURE VII.—SLEDGING.

OH ho ! sledges in Snow,
How funny they look, how fast they go ;
By the sound of the bell you may always tell
When sledges are coming over the Snow !

PICTURE VIII.—BOYS MAKING SNOWBALLS.

OH ho ! balls of Snow,
The further they roll the larger they grow ,
Come with me, what fun it will be,
To roll you up in a ball of Snow !

PICTURE IX.—A SNOW MAN.

OH ho ! frozen Snow,
We'll make a Guy before you go ;
The sun they say will melt it away,
But don't you care for the sun, good Snow !

PICTURE X.—SNOW FAIRIES FLYING AWAY.

OH ho ! melting Snow,
Since you're going, be quick and go ;
We have had our fun, and yours is done—
Go as fast as you can, and good-bye, Snow !

How Auntie's English Rosebud in the Snow-Land delighted to hear of Auntie's Snow Dreams ! The little one had Snow Dreams of her own, that were not unlike those of her Auntie.

And once when the heaven-sent Snow was going back to the clouds, leaving earth to sing its Easter anthem, that English Rosebud wished to go with the Snow ; and Auntie, dreaming pleasant stories to tell the children, never dreamed the most lovely, most real dream of any—of how

“ Snow soft, snow white, snow silently ;
Our darling bud up-curved
And dropped in the Grave, God's Lap,
Our wee red rose of all the world.”



V.

STARVED.

STIFF and stark on the pavement
A poor little birdie lies,
Whose song in the days of sunshine
Rang joyously in the skies.
Only a little birdie—
Yet pleasure and pain it knew ;
It lived on this earth like others,
And it liked to live like you.

It stole to your open window,
And its starved wee spirit leapt
As crumbs that it longed to gather
All into the fire were swept !
Thus it died of the pangs of hunger,
Just as one of us might do ;
And He values the lives of birdies,
The God who made them and you.



A QUEER HIVE.

VI.

A QUEER HIVE.

“TELL me a story, Mammy,” said Horace, after he had done learning his lessons, and eating his dinner, and bumping his head, and unlacing his boots, and getting things off his mind generally. “Tell me a story, Mammy.”

She was sitting in her rocking-chair, warming her toes, and wishing the cobwebs could be cleared out of her head ; and she said to little Horace, “what shall the story be about ?”

“About me,” replied the bright boy, as quick as you please, and his Mammy laughed, and told him about her having cobwebs on the brain, which prevented her from finding a story that had to be *made up* ; but Horace only smiled and settled himself half on the hearthrug and half on the fender, and looked up for the story, so what could she do but try to find one !

“I will tell you what I saw in the fire, just a little ago, it *that* will do,” said the Mammy ; and Horace replied quite condescendingly that it would do very nicely ; so she began :

“Once there was a little man, he might be old, and he might be young, the fire knows best, and he owned a very curious hive. It was not like a beehive, that contains nothing

but bees, and wax, and honey ; nor was it like a wasp's nest, nor a bird's nest, nor any kind of nest which has only one sort of creatures in it. Oh no !

“ In this hive there dwelt a number of strange insects, differing as much from each other as Negroes differ from Norsemen, looking as much like the same species as do Esquimaux and English, and yet proceeding as truly from the same source as do the Chinaman and the Celt. Thus all the tribes of insect-like beings were called by one name, just as all human kind are called men.”

Horace. “ Were they really insects ? ”

“ The fire didn't say, it only told me they were *like* insects, and it spoke of them as bees, butterflies, etc., so I do as the fire did, I call them by the names of the insects which they resembled.

“ First of all, when the hive was new, there was only a tribe of flower-insects in it. They grew like flowers, but they had life like creatures, and they had souls which could leave their bodies whenever they wished, and which floated on invisible wings. I suppose if these beings had been real flowers, their souls would have been called their perfume by people who cannot see spirits ; but being just the creatures that they were, their souls were just souls, and not smells. They grew very sweetly and silently, and opened their fairy cups and bells so cheerfully when other tribes began to dwell in the hive, and to come to them for sweetmeats. And indeed it was wonderful how soon the hive became filled with busy

queer folk. There was one tribe like bees, and they were always busy, storing honey and making wax, and attending to their young ones, and never meddling with anybody's affairs except their own. Sometimes they borrowed sweets, of which to make honey, from their neighbours the flower-tribe, but oftener they went and brought ready-made honey from other hives; and a party of them was always to be found wherever a drop of sweetness had been placed. Yes! they were certainly a class of honest, hard-working, respectable insects, but just a trifle heavy in their flight, and just a little tiresome, with their perpetual business-hum.

"Another tribe which took up its quarters in this queer hive, was very unlike the bee one. They were like butterflies, and had most lovely colours and most fairy wings, and they fluttered here and there, never still an instant, sometimes getting in the way of their busy neighbours, when a quarrel would be the result; but their favourite occupation was trying how far they could fly above the hive without striking against anything or getting lost. Unfortunately they did not possess the same magnetic chain which drew the bees and the souls of the flowers safe home, no matter how far they strayed; so those poor butterflies very frequently lost their way and never came back to the hive.

"There was also a very disagreeable order of Hiveites which resembled gnats so much that the fire thinks if you had seen them, you would certainly have believed they were true gnats."

Horace. "If all the beasts were so like the things they were said to be like, let's just say they were the beasts themselves and be done; it's much easier to remember 'a gnat' than a 'thing like a gnat!'"

Mammy. "I daresay you are right, and as the fire doesn't mind, I shall not speak of the Hiveites as being *like*, but just *being*."

"Well! those gnats were small, but oh! how they did sting! and the worst of it was that they were very quick in their movements, so that the others could not catch them, and many a sore sting they gave, but fortunately there were not a great many of them, so that the harm they did was limited. But there was another tribe in the hive that was very formidable indeed, and these were the wasps. They never even pretended to work or do anything that was useful, but went buzzing about spreading fear and consternation wherever they came.

"The little man who owned the hive ought not to have allowed those wasps to rampage in that way, but he took no notice of the mischief they did, and so they feasted on honey they had not gathered, and killed their innocent neighbours, and taught the foolish ones to be wicked, and were really a great nuisance in the hive.

"I think the fire said that the most numerous tribe was that of the moths. They looked exceedingly harmless, and were very silly; but they never molested any one, and flitted noiselessly about on silver wings that looked quite as lovely as those of the butterflies.

"It was only the flower-tribe that knew how those moths hurt the fine tapestry hangings of the hive by hiding their eggs in its soft folds, and then those eggs grew into hungry caterpillars, and we don't need either the flowers or the fire to tell us what harm comes of *that*.

"Then there was the fly tribe, and they were certainly harmless enough, noisy and blundering at times, and usually ended their course prematurely by running against a spider's web, but they never hurt any one but themselves, and they always had something lively to talk about. Their buzz was the worst thing about them, and *it* wasn't very troublesome, so that on the whole the flies were rather popular among the Hiveites.

"I ought not to have left the spider tribe to the last, for it was not the least important by any means.

"They were ugly creatures, as most spiders are, but they had a work to perform in that hive which was very necessary, and they performed it energetically. They had webs in every corner where a web could be made to hang, and they drove a brisk trade in the butcher line, you may be sure, seeing that there were so many idle and foolish insects fluttering about, as if they had not an idea worth a drop of dew in their heads.

"But all that came into the webs were welcomed by the spiders; wasps and butterflies, bees and moths, gnats and flies, they were all alike to the spiders, and that was not what was meant by any means when they were allowed to go into

the hive and keep order. They were intended to destroy the wicked insects, and of course if the foolish ones ran against a cobweb and got caught, that was their own fault; but the spiders had no business to set traps for busy bees and pretty butterflies.

"However, the truth was the little man who was King of the Hiveites never tried to keep order amongst them at all. He let them all do as they pleased, come and go as they liked, quarrel whenever they felt disposed, and the consequence was that things went all wrong together in the hive.

"Oh, it was an odd place; but it was very sad to see such unruly subjects and such a foolish king, and the fire felt it all very much."

Horace. "I wonder if the fire felt when I upset the tea-kettle into its very heart."

Mammy. "If it felt sorry for the little man who was King of the disorderly Hiveites, I think it must have felt sorry at being quenched by a stream of water from a black tea-kettle. But, as I said, the plain truth was all the tribes did just as they pleased, and minded nobody except old Morpheus the King's servant, who used to walk about muffled in a grey cloak; and when the insects grew very riotous, as they usually did every evening, Morpheus would go and wave his hands over the hive and drop his grey mantle upon it, and then all the restless creatures inside would swarm and buzz in a confused way, but very soon they would stop work and fun and mischief, and drop listless and stupid in all directions.

"You would have thought they had all been struck dead, all except the flower-souls, and they were allowed to go out over the world to gather sweetness, which they gave away to their little King as soon as they came back.

"It might have been a good thing if Morpheus had kept his grey cloak hung always over the hive which had no order or law in it, but the fire said that could not be ; so every morning the insects were free again to buzz, and fly, and sting, and work, and fight, and think 'all of self and nothing of your neighbour.'

"This sort of thing went on for a good while until the misdeeds of the Hiveites got their little King into trouble.

"The fire did not say what the trouble was, but it must have been something very bad for a king to be in, for the flames flickered in the most agitated manner when telling about it, and a few cinders dropped quite subdued by the recollection, so I did not like to ask more about the King's trouble, and the fire skipped that part of the story."

Horace. "I wonder what it was ; perhaps he broke a gold dish, or dropped his crown, or forgot how to spell his name."

Mammy. "I think it must have been something much worse than any of these ; but whatever it was, the little King got into trouble through the naughtiness of his Hiveites, and he was very unhappy.

"Now, it happened one day, when the little King was very sad, that a tall grave man looked into the hive (which was in

a terrible state of confusion at the time), and then knocked at the King's door, and said—

“‘My friend, your Hiveites are a very disorderly set of people. If it were not for the flower-tribe, which I see is still very numerous, and that is a hopeful sign, I should say yours is one of the most ill-mannered nations I ever came across. The tribes seem to have forgotten their lawful avocations, and obedience to their owner ; and Morpheus tells me that even he is losing his old authority over them, for some of the moths and gnats have found out how the souls of the flowers keep awake and go to gather sweet dew, and they try to leave the hive too, but of course get into a mess.’

“‘I know they do,’ sighed the King ; ‘they trouble me very much by going out after the others, but I can’t help it.’

“‘You had better help it,’ replied the Grave Man. ‘Believe me, if you do not assert your authority as sovereign of the hive, and make some strict laws for keeping order, you will find that your hive will soon be in a state of rebellion and confusion which you will be powerless to put right. And then what will your brother-kings think of you, or what will your King say when you cannot bring him your proper tribute of home-made honey?’

“This, that the Grave Man said, so vexed and frightened the owner of the hive, that he determined upon at once setting things right ; but when he peeped into the hive, the noise and confusion were so great that he could not make himself seen or heard.

‘Dear-a-me! I shall never be able to set these creatures all straight,’ said he to himself. ‘I wish my grave friend had told me how to do it—yes—*How*—that’s the difficult word. Can’t you help me, Morpheus?’ he asked of his faithful old servant, but Morpheus shook his head.

“Now the Hiveites had seen the Grave Man, and had heard all that he and their little King had said, and the flower-tribe whispered sweetly to him :

“‘We could tell you what to do, King, dear ; will you take us for your counsellors?’ But they spoke so timidly and low, that their master could not catch what they said, and before they had time to repeat the words, a splendid butterfly flew hastily against his ear and said that the right thing to do would be to turn everybody out of the hive, and have a regular good house cleaning. ‘We can amuse ourselves in the sunshine nicely till you are ready to take us back, and some of us may not want to come back, and some of us you may wish to leave out ; but your best plan, my King, is to clear out the hive : send good and bad off together, and choose your own company when you have got a clean hive to put them in.’

“‘Thank you, that is a grand, a brilliant idea—almost as grand and brilliant as your own wings, beauty,’ exclaimed the King, and instantly proceeded to follow the butterfly’s advice.

“You may believe there was a fine hubbub when that clearing out began.

"The butter, and not butter, flies, with the gnats and moths, went off willingly enough, but making a great noise all the same; but the bees and wasps rebelled most buzzingly.

"The bees gathered around their honeycomb and prepared for war.

"The wasps crept into the flower-cups, hoping to escape detection that way.

"As for the spiders, they felt very keenly the injustice of their master, the disobedience of their fellow-subjects, and the comforts of the hive; therefore quietly ensconced themselves in dark places, and obstinately refused to budge an inch.

"It was a dreadful time for the little King, and he was very foolish to have taken the advice of no one wiser than a butterfly. But he determined on subduing all the tribes, and though they had a great deal of right on their side, he had might on his, *and got the best of it.*

"He swept away the cobwebs, and with them the spiders.

"He fumigated the honeycomb, and down dropped the bees as helpless as if they had been dead. He found the wasps in the flower-bells, and forgetful of the sweet creatures that had been his chief joy, he ruthlessly struck every flower from its stalk, and trampled it and the wasp concealed in it to pieces.

"It was a terrible war, oh! very terrible, but just when the little King was standing victor over the last of his rebel subjects, the Grave Man looked in at the door of the hive, then tapped its owner on the breast, and said, with a grave smile—

“‘My friend, I fear you have not gone the right way to work in attempting to establish order. Killing and curing are two very different things.’

“The little King looked ruefully around the desolate hive, and felt very sad and very sorry for his poor naughty insects; not at all like a conqueror did the King look and feel.

“‘Why didn’t you come to me for advice?’ said his serious friend.

“‘I was in such a hurry I did not take time to think,’ was the frank reply. ‘Some one else proposed clearing out the hive and having a good cleaning, and I did that.’

“‘Yes! you did—I suppose it was one of your silly subjects who gave *that* advice,’ said the Grave Man. ‘Kings should never follow the advice of their subjects in matters belonging to the government of themselves.’

“‘Is it too late to get your advice now?’ asked the little King humbly.

“‘No, I think we can save some of the rebels, and help the innocent who suffered for the misdeeds of the others yet; and I hope to see your hive repeopled with orderly tribes.’

“So to work went the little King and his friend.

“The first thing they did was to send a current of fresh air among the poor stupified bees, who very soon began to revive and crawl about, and were soon busy over their honey-making again.

“Then the cobwebs were washed away, and flower-roots

planted in all the corners, and the old flower-roots were tidied and watered; and very soon tiny flowers began to grow up and to send their sweet souls abroad as before. A few of the harmless flies, seeing the bees coming and going in the old way, with their honey-bags filled, as if nothing had happened, lighted on the hive, and on getting back to their old quarters declared it was much nicer there than in the wide world.

“‘Shall we let them stay?’ asked the little King of the Grave Man; and the Grave Man smiled, and said, ‘Certainly; they do no harm, and a little fun is as good as honey.’

“Then a young spider, who had escaped the general slaughter, seeing the flies return to the hive, went in also; and a flower made room for him in the corner, telling him in a kind neighbourly way that he was worth his room and welcome, for wherever insects were inclined to be idle or mischievous, *there* also ought to be the police.

“And the Grave Man said much the same, only he added, ‘Make laws, little King, and then all will work well.’

“So the spider made himself comfortable, spread a beautiful web among the flower stalks, and did his duty as policeman of the hive in a most conscientious way.

“All this time the butterflies were flitting about enjoying themselves after a fashion, but not feeling altogether happy without a king and a home; and at last they resolved to meet on the silver lining of a cloud to arrange about setting up some sort of habitation for themselves.

"What was their surprise to meet there a number of flower-souls just arrived from the old hive.

" 'We never expected to meet you among the clouds,' said the butterflies.

" 'And we never expected to find you doing a very sensible action,' laughed the flower-souls.

"It was said so gently, and the butterflies were so good-natured, that the speech was well received.

" 'We were consulting about setting up some sort of a hive for ourselves—larger of course—and finer—more butterfly in fact—than the old home, but made after it, for it wasn't a bad place to be in after all; and the butterflies sighed.

" 'Nay, don't set up a new home, come back with us to the old one,' replied the flower-souls. 'It *is* small, the dear old home, and often rather too crowded for strict comfort; but when folk don't quarrel it's wonderful how many find room in a small space, and it has some *queerious* but very cozy corners, we assure you, and really it is a delightful place to be in, and it is growing bigger every day.'

" 'But the King does not want us to come back. We hear that he has become quite as grave as the Grave Man, and is filling the hive with nothing but busy working tribes—dingy coloured and sulky,'—and the butterflies curled their antennæ scornfully, and fluttered their bright wings in quite a disdainful manner.

" 'Ah! you are quite wrong, dears,' said the flower-souls,

'We are neither dingy nor sulky, and yet the King cherishes us.'

"'But then you are useful as well as beautiful,' replied the other, 'you make sweetmeats, and you fly about everywhere, bringing home all the lovely fancies that you meet; but we poor butterflies do nothing but fly; and when we try to fly *far* like you, we catch the fancies but we lose ourselves, because we have not, like you, stationary bodies which draw us home whenever we wish to go!'

"'Oh! you dear foolish people,' laughed the flower-souls, 'why, you were as useful in the hive as the bees, if you had only known it, and not allowed yourselves to get so feather-headed, but had used your opportunities in the right way.'

"'Your lovely wings and graceful lively ways were as delightful as any foreign fancies we ever brought to our King, and did us all good, for they made us think of things better than honey, and when the bees wearied the King with their incessant toiling, he used to enjoy having you to play with.'

"'You amused and soothed him, and brought back his good temper, and he misses you very much—even the Grave Man wants you back, and we—ah! do you know, darlings, our petals are pining for love of your wings, which they always thought so like themselves.'

"'We do miss you very much. Won't you come home to the hive?'

"At that the butterflies rose in a cloud, and, led by the

flower-souls, flew straight home, where there was great rejoicing over their return.

"In fact they found themselves of use after all, and that discovery made them exceedingly happy. But they could not overcome their taste for travelling, so the flower-souls agreed that they and the butterflies should go abroad together, and the souls should lead their friends safe back, and in return the butterflies were to love the petals of their sweet guides for ever and a day.

"What became of the gnats, and wasps, and moths, I never quite understood, though the fire tried its best to enlighten me.

"There was a great row one day among the bees, and it turned out that a wasp had crept in pretending he was a bee, but the spider knew him, and told the flower, and the flower told the King, and he killed the wasp *at once*.

"It was said, too, that sometimes a solitary gnat or moth stole into the hive, and tried to establish itself in its old quarters; but the wise little King, by the advice of his chief counsellor the Grave Man, planted sentinel-flowers at the doors of the hive, and the souls of those flowers were poison to evil-doers, so it seldom happened that the little King's dominion was ever visited (and never colonised) by the wicked tribes who overran the hive before and created so much trouble."

Mammy paused, and looked into the fire.

"Is that all?" asked Horace.

"Is that all, good fire?" asked Mammy; and they both looked intently at the fire.

"It is going out, so there can't be any more stories in it," said Mammy.

"Well!" answered Horace, "I know who the little King was. That was me, and the Hive was my head, and the Tribes were my thoughts, and Morpheus was sleep—but the Grave Man—who was he, Mammy?"

"Look into the fire, Horace; there is one little flicker at the lower bar, just in front of the cinder that spoke last: no, the fire has gone out, it can't tell more—well, ask a flower-soul to tell you; Morpheus is coming, my boy, so make haste."

And Horace asked the soul of the flower Thought, and it said, that the name of the grave man was Conscience.



VII.

SPARROWS.

“Fear ye not therefore :” . . . “not one of them is forgotten by God :
. . . ye are of more value than many sparrows.”—LUKE xii. 6, 7.

O H, you sprightly, homely sparrow,
I can see you at the casement
Picking up our supper crumbs !
You have wings,—are earth-bounds narrow ?
Are you smitten with amazement
When the dark cold winter numbs ?

Self-asserting and confiding
Do you know that we could harm you,
Or we might forget the crumbs ?
“Ah ! we sparrows get much chiding
For our voices never charm you ;
But HIS Lesson through us comes.”

VIII.

WHAT THE NORTH WIND DID ONCE.

ONE day a little child went out to have a run on the lawn, but forgot to put on a warm coat and hat. The Wind was blowing keen and cross, and it said to the child :

“ You’ve got pretty roses
On each little cheek,
But I’ll steal them from you
In less than a week.”

The child was very angry when it heard the Wind say that, for it was very proud of its rosy cheeks. It had two very red roses, one on each cheek, and a whole bunch of cherries on its mouth, and it did not like the thought of losing them ; but instead of running into the nice warm house, where the cold North Wind could not catch it, the child stayed out of doors to quarrel, and it said—

“ North Wind, naughty, angry North Wind,
Come to steal my pretty flowers !
Go and take the glittering snowflakes
Falling from the sky in showers.



WHAT THE NORTH WIND DID ONCE.



Go and eat the frost and raindrops,
They are good enough for you ;
I shall keep my pretty cherries,
And my pretty roses too."

And the child stamped its tiny foot, and scolded the North Wind, who only laughed, and whistled a wild tune as it danced round the child and kissed its cheeks and lips, and then went away, singing :

" Oh ! such pretty flowers and berries,
Roses red and bright ripe cherries
Stolen from a little dearie,
Who will soon grow pale and weary
Now its pretty flowers have vanished,
With the Wind to Northland banished."

Then the child became rather frightened, and shivered all through, as it ran into the house and looked in the glass, and found that sure enough all the red roses had gone.

And after that it became very pale and thin and ill, and Mamma said it was all through going out and quarrelling with the North Wind ; but she was sorry for the child, so she asked the South Wind to go and find the roses and cherries, and the South Wind came to where the Babywinds had a playroom, and *there* were the child's lost treasures.

So the South Wind brought them to Mamma, and she put them in a spoon with some sugar, and the child ate them all up, and very soon they came back to its cheeks and lips, and

next time it went out it found the young leaves laughing
at the story of its roses, while the North Wind stole out of the
garden, crying—

“ All that came of being naughty,
All that came of being rude ;
Though the Winds are rough and restless,
Children should be always good.”



IX.

THE GIANT'S PIE.

"TELL us a real giant story, Mammy," said Horace.

"And don't let it be a story that can be *explained*," added Tom.

"But don't let it have a moral at the end," remarked Stephen.

"It mustn't end sadly," pleaded Charlie.

So this was what she told them.

There was once a Mamma, who had some little boys—little noisy, restless boys, who were seldom out of hot water; and if you wish to know what "boys always in hot water" means, you should ask the first college-bred man you meet, and I am sure he will explain it better than I can.

I shall not tell you the names of those little boys. You can call them any names you like.

One day their mother had a very bad headache, so she lay down on the sofa, and said—

"Now, chicks, do try to be very quiet for a wee while, so that I may rest this poor head."

But the thoughtless children forgot to be still in a moment, and were soon making as much noise as ever. "Oh dear," said their mother, "you do love your noise much more than you love me."

"Poor Mammy! we are so sorry," they shouted loudly, and directly knocked over her pet gipsy table. So then their mother told them to go and sit on the mat outside the door for exactly ten minutes.

It was a nice soft mat, and the room was near the top of a stair, so the little boys snuggled together against the closed door.

They whispered stories to each other, and kicked up their heels, and laughed aloud, and did not mind a bit.

You must know that what I am telling you about happened on a wintry afternoon, and the light faded rather quickly, as it usually does on winter afternoons.

As the noisy mindless boys rolled about on the mat, they heard a great tramp! tramp! tramp! on the stair, and who should march up but a great BIG GIANT, carrying a great big sack on his shoulder.

Sniff, sniff, snort, snort, went the Giant. Then he said in a loud voice, "I smell bad boys! I smell bad boys!" and at that moment he stumbled against the little ones sitting on the mat, as quiet as mice when the cat comes by.

"Oh, *here* they are! Fine fat fellows!" and the Giant picked them up and popped them into his sack.

Down they flopped into the great big sack, and as they

fell they came against something soft and warm, which moved. What should that be but more bad boys!

Oh, how frightened they all were! and of course they cried very much when they felt the Giant go tramp, tramp, tramp down the stair and over the hill, leaving great deep holes in the snow where his great feet had stepped.

Soon the Giant came to his own house, and there by the kitchen fire sat the *Guy-kerl* (Giant's wife).

"Here, wife," he said in his loud voice; "here are some fine juicy boys, highly flavoured with naughtiness. Let's have a naughty boy-pie for supper."

"Yes, Giant," said the Guy-kerl, like a dutiful wife; and then she brought out her kneading-board, flour, lard, rolling-pin, pepper, and salt.

When she had made a huge crust, she brought a *tremendous* dish.

Then she opened the Giant's sack, and, taking out all the boys one by one, she laid them in the dish in layers, like herrings in a barrel, and she sprinkled pepper and salt plentifully among them before putting the crust, with a *tappatooree*, on the top.

While this was going on, the boys were not very comfortable.

One coughed, another sneezed, a third kicked, and a fourth cried, and the crust did not lie very still; so I suppose the boys had a *not* pleasant time of it lying in layers in the Guy-kerl's big dish, waiting till the oven was hot.

In the meantime the mother had waked up from her short nap, with her headache gone ; so she called out, "You may come in now, monkeys."

There was no answer. "You may get up from the mat, noisy chicks." Still no answer ; so *she* got up and opened the door, but—*there were no boys on the mat !*

The mother went to her nursery, hoping to find them there. "Are the boys not with you, Sarah?"

"No, ma'am. I thought they were with you."

"What has become of them," said the mother, beginning to look grave.

Just then Sarah remembered hearing the Giant come up the stair.

"Oh dear," she cried, "were they naughty? Because, if so, I know the Giant who comes after bad boys was on the stair, and he will have taken them away."

"That will be it," said the mother, beginning to cry, and running out to follow the Giant.

She easily found her way up the hill to the Giant's house, for his big footprints were still in the snow.

When she got to the house, she walked straight into the kitchen, and there sat the Giant and the Guy-kerl, while on the table stood the big pie dish with the crust, moving like a curtain does when children are playing bo-peep behind it. The mother guessed all about it at once, so she said quickly, "Have you seen the wonderful sight there is in the valley?"

"No," said the Giant and his wife. "What is it?"

"Oh, you should go and look. It is the marriage of Snow and the North Wind. Jack Frost is the priest, Miss Snow Crystal is bridesmaid, and Mr Icicle is groomsman.

"They are to have the moon for a wedding-cake, and all the points of the compass are to play the wedding march. You should see it."

The Giant and the Guy-Kerl ran to the door directly; and as soon as they were gone out of the kitchen, the mother picked up the big dish and ran out by the back door.

Down the hill she sped.

But the Giant and his wife could see nothing in the valley more remarkable than a snow-storm; so they came back to their warm kitchen, and at once they discovered what the mother had done.

"Oh, my pie! my splendid naughty-boy pie!" roared the Giant; and he set off in pursuit at once.

Down the hill he strode, making such a thundering noise that the earth shook, and the mother knew what it meant.

She put the dish down in the snow, and lifting up the crust, she called out, "The Giant is coming! get out, boys! run for your lives! scuttle away!"

You may be sure they waited for no second bidding, but ran off in every direction, and got safe to their homes.

As soon as the dish was emptied the mother packed it full of snow, popped the crust on again, and ran off.

Presently the Giant came blundering along, and nearly fell into his own pie-dish.

"Oh, here it is, my precious pie!" and he took up the dish and carried it home.

"Here is the beautiful pie, wife; put it in the oven."

The Guy-Kerl did so, and they sat and nodded by the fire till the pie was quite cooked (as they supposed).

"Bring knives and things, wife," growled the Giant.

So she set the supper table very neatly; and then she took the pie from the oven and put it on the table in front of the Giant, who glared at it with savage delight.

The crust smelt nice, but had fallen rather flat; and the Guy-Kerl said—

"I am afraid the boys must have been rather *too* juicy --perhaps been crying more than usual—for I see there is rather a superabundance of clear gravy."

Not a word said the Giant, but flourishing his big carving-knife and fork, he cut a huge slice out of the crust, and laid bare the contents of the dish.

"What's wrong?" exclaimed the Guy-Kerl, for first he turned red, then purple, then green, then black. "What's wrong?" she shrieked.

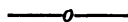
"And the Giant uttered solemnly, "Water! water! No Boys!"

"It's all nonsense, Mammy," said Horace, glancing fearfully towards the door.

"I'll never be naughty," sighed Charlie.

"It couldn't be true," whispered Tom.

"It's a jolly story," exclaimed Stephen.
Then they all cried out—
"It's only one of Mammy's Snow Dreams."
So she laughed, and sent them off to plague some one
else.



BABY OR DOLLY.

I THINK it's as pretty as Dolly,
Though Dolly's a beauty, too ;
And it has not Dolly's lovely curls,
And its eyes are not so blue.

It's not so quiet as Dolly,
Excepting when it's asleep ;
But Dolly will never walk or talk,
And Baby will crow and creep.

Shall I love it as much as Dolly ?
Well, dear old Dolly, you see,
Will not grow up as I grow up,
And be always some one to me.

You don't hear Dolly crying
Whenever she's washed and drest ;
But somehow—I think—upon the whole
I shall love the Baby the best.

X.

ANNIE'S BIRTHDAY.

TWO YEARS OLD.

JUST two years ago
Came a tiny, nestling bright.
Little rosy cheeks it had,
Little eyes as dark as night.
Little Annie, Mamma's Birdie,
Little Annie, Papa's Birdie,
Little Annie, heart's delight.

Annie could not move a finger,
For she was so frail and small,
Just like pussy's new-come kittens,
Round and fat like butterball ;
Such a funny dot was Annie,
Could not speak a word at all.

But Mamma loved little Annie,
And she nursed her on her breast,
Singing sweetest music to her,
Watching fondly o'er her rest ;
Annie slept on that dear cradle
Like a birdie in its nest.



ANNIE'S BIRTHDAY.

Then another summer came,
And the wee one "flapped its wings,"
Shouting, standing all alone ;
Nursie said, " Our Birdie sings."
Little Annie, Mamma's Birdie,
Little Annie, Papa's Birdie,
Little Pet, what joy she brings.

Here it is wee Annie's birthday
Come again another time ;
Kiss her, hug her, dance her, jump her,
Sing her every nonsense rhyme ;
Birdie bright, whose pattering footfalls
Sound more sweet than fairy chime.

Annie's birthday. Dearest Annie,
May each day bring something new,
Something that will make our Annie
Better, brighter, bonnier too.
Mamma's tiny trotty Annie,
Papa's little love-bird Annie,
Everybody's darling too.



Then another summer came,
And the wee one "flapped its wings,"
Shouting, standing all alone ;
Nursie said, " Our Birdie sings."
Little Annie, Mamma's Birdie,
Little Annie, Papa's Birdie,
Little Pet, what joy she brings.

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XI.

TEE'S HAMMER.

"**I** CAN'T think what has come to the child," some one said; "he won't go to bed without his hammer. He takes it with him to church. It lies beside his plate at meals.

"He carries that hammer wherever he goes,
Dropping it now upon somebody's toes,
Chopping at fingers, and chipping at doors,
Pounding the tables, and denting the floors,
Banging on boxes, and thumping on chairs;
'Tee's hamma *is* noosful,' the urchin declares.
So he drives in a nail wherever he can,
And thinks himself quite a strong carpenter's man."

Tee was never happy if parted from his hammer; but he did make such a bad use of it that one night after he had fallen asleep, with his cheek pressed lovingly to his beloved hammer, some one came and drew the hammer softly away!

When Tee awoke next morning, his hammer was gone!

Oh! what a hubbub there was. But the hammer did not

appear again. It was shut up in a drawer, and all that day Tee was most unhappy.

He sobbed himself to sleep next night, and then he had a very curious dream.

He thought that a queer little voice spoke from the top drawer of Mammy's bureau, and this was what the queer little voice said—

“ A boy with a sunshiny, laughing face
 Never should fall into any disgrace ;
A boy with a merry, blue, honest eye
 Never should know how to sob or cry ;
A boy with a gentle and gladsome voice
 Never should make any angry noise ;
A boy with a pair of round, sturdy legs
Should always be using such ‘ handy pegs ; ’
A boy who has fingers both willing and strong
Should *never* be meddling, or doing what's wrong ;
And SOME ONE they call the bright sunbeam of joy
Should all his life long be a *very good boy*.”

“ That's me, of course,” said Tee ; “ and that is all true, and I don't ever mean to use my face, or eyes, or voice, or legs, or fingers, or anything for wrong purposes ; so there ! ”

“ Who is it that makes a bad use of his hammer ? ” asked the queer little voice.

“ Oh, I see what you mean. I am sure I will never use it for a naughty purpose again. I always thought it was the

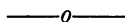
hammer's fault when anything got damaged by my knocks, but I know now that it was my own fault. My dear darling hammer was always good. Oh, if I could but find it! Queer little voice, can you tell me where my hammer has gone?"

"Perhaps it went away until you learned how to use it aright."

"Well, I have learned *now*. But who are you that talks so nicely to me?"

"I am Tee's hammer."

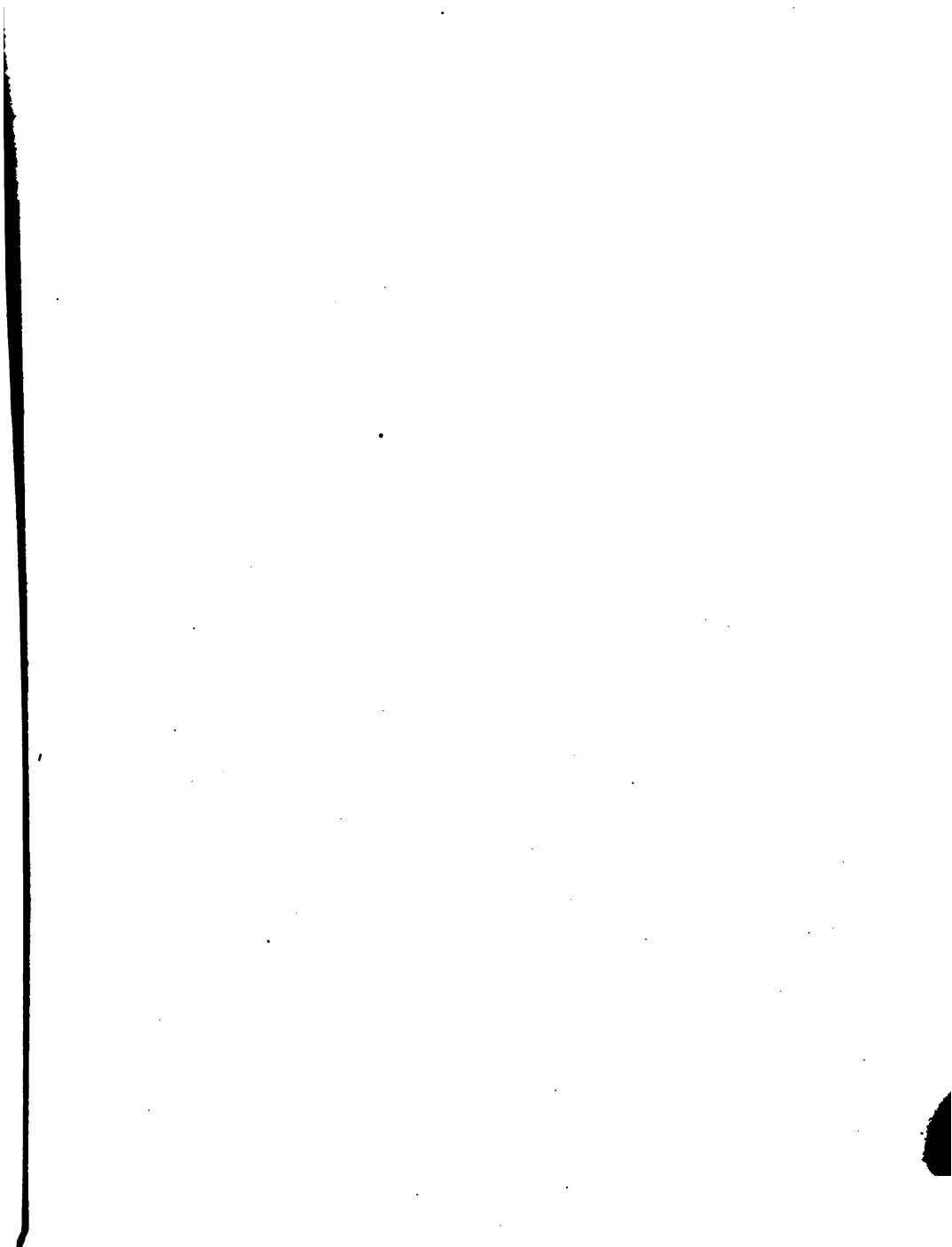
And then Tee woke up to find his hammer lying on the pillow.



LIFE IN DEATH.

CHRISTMAS comes with snowy mantle,
Winter winds and daytime drear;
For the heart of gentle Nature
Mourns beside an ivied bier,
Whereon lies, in solemn sadness,
One we call the dying year.

Hark! upon the mournful silence
Breaks the Song of heaven and earth;
And there thrills through all creation
Memories of our Saviour's birth;
While the New Year, dawning brightly,
Chants a strain of hope and mirth.





THE WITCH-CAT.

XII.

THE WITCH-CAT.

IT is a tragic and a terrible story, still it was so very *qucerious* (as a little boy said) that perhaps you will be amused by it; and then it has a moral which is easily seen—and I can't say as much for the rest of our stories.

So I think, children, dear, it will do you good to hear the history of my black cat Tiny.

Well, you see, this was how it all began.

"C. C." said to me one day that she would like me to have a kitten to play with, now that all my "babies had grown into boys;" and I did not like to tell the little lady that I hate cats, because, you must know, she would have looked at me in her odd, wise way, and her brown eyes would have had a sorry, asking look that I am always afraid to meet; so I said, honestly enough, that I would like very much to accept her offer of Topsy's kitten (Topsy was C. C.'s cat).

And one day shortly afterwards C. C. alighted on my knee, like a bright bird of passage on the branch of a dry old tree, and produced from the wee basket on her arm a wee ball of black fur.

It had a little curled tag at one end, and two greeny-yellow fire-lights at the other, with two tufts of wool above them. There were four tags at the sides, with white ends to them—and that was Tiny!

C. C. named this *queerious* thing "Tiny," and it seemed a nice name, and she never got any other, even when she had grown into something very much the reverse of Tiny.

From the first moment of our acquaintance Tiny attached herself to me, and also from the first moment I seemed to know that she was no ordinary kitten. There was something elfish in her look, something uncanny in her ways. She never played like other young creatures do; but whenever the wind began to blow hard, Miss Tiny would jump up and go flying over the sofa, up the curtains, into dark corners, across my head and shoulders, like a being gone mad; and all the time she looked as serious as if she were performing some grave business, while I was going into fits of laughter at her funny antics.

Tiny's education began at an early stage of our acquaintance, because I had a beautiful canary, and I loved it greatly—and so did Tiny. But Tiny's love was not like mine, for I fed the canary, but Tiny wished to feed upon it; so I had frequently to exhort her on the subject.

She could not, or would not, understand English, and I have never studied caterwauling, so I was obliged to tell her my mind by means of an instrument which the boys call "Mammy's black fingers."

Here is the picture of it :



This mode of instruction, however, offended the Witch-Cat very much ; and she became exceedingly jealous of Chippy, and never missed an opportunity of springing at his cage in the most unlady-like manner.

When the summer holidays came we took Tiny with us to the sea-side, and as Chippy was left in charge of a friend, I thought there would be no more quarrelling. But, to my dismay, no sooner was Tiny taken out of her basket than she ejected the lawful cats of the house, and took possession of the apartments in a most imperious manner.

Now though her witchy character had begun to be acknowledged by all who met her, such a setting at defiance of all laws amongst cats or people was not to be tolerated, so war was waged with Miss Tiny whenever she attempted to molest the felines of the establishment.

But I am bound to confess that we all got the worst of it in such encounters—unless I except the broom handle, which gave as good as it got, and seldom failed to drive the Witch-Cat from her retreat, wherever that might chance to be.

Tiny did not enjoy the holidays, and seemed really glad when she found herself once more at home.

Her sea-side experience might have taught her what misery results from indulging a quarrelsome nature, but

alas! only the most disastrous experiences will teach that lesson.

No sooner was Chippy's cage back in its place, than up the nearest curtain, like a very spirit of evil, darted Tiny, and though I was almost as quick as she, I scarcely reached the window in time to rescue my golden pet from the claws of my black one.

"This will never do, you imp of darkness," said I to Tiny.

So I provided myself with a more formidable weapon than the "taws," and I put Tiny into a netted bag which I hung up beside the cage, and then I proceeded to punish her, feeling very sorry for her all the time. Whenever she even looked at Chippy, down came the rope on her devoted head.

After this severe but necessary treatment Tiny never went near the cage, but would sit on my skirt and gaze at the pretty bird, evidently brooding over her wrongs and meditating revenge.

I never doubt that she bewitched poor Chippy, for one day during a thunderstorm she began to perform the most extraordinary manœuvres I ever witnessed.

Round and round the room she darted, never approaching the cage, but continually looking at it—springing and jumping as if she had wings, and glaring at Chippy with all her might. I almost fancied I saw sparks fly out of the hairs on her back, and would not have been astonished had she suddenly gone off in spontaneous combustion (the *short* for that, dears, is to burn up to nothing).

All at once Chippy dropped from his perch, quite dead.

Some people say the thunderstorm killed him, but *I* believe it was the Witch-Cat.

If you could have seen the looks of sly satisfaction which she cast at me while I mourned over my dear bird ; but when I proceeded to bury it in a cocoa-nut shell, and to suspend the shell in poor Chippy's empty cage, Tiny's wrath could no longer be concealed, and springing up she actually and deliberately scratched me !

She had never done so before, and she never did it again ; and I made great allowance for her, feeling that I would have liked to do the same if I had had a friend who seemed to care more for some one else than for me. I am sure I would have bewitched the *some one* and scratched the friend.

But I would have been sorry *afterwards*, and Tiny was not sorry one bit.

You would have thought that when Chippy was out of the way she would have tried to be good.

Alas, no ! and when we are disposed to be cross, plenty of causes can be found to provoke the crossness ; and so it was with Miss Tiny.

Whenever a lady came in carrying a muff, or wearing fur of any kind, the Witch-Cat was sure to dart upon it and begin worrying it.

A friend, who is partial both to cats and witches, said that Tiny was really recognising the garments of her tribe ; but—I fear—I fear—

If it had been only fur that she attacked I might have

believed that statement, but I never dared leave any kind of lace or muslin where Tiny could find it, for it was certain to be chewed to bits at once ; and as for my balls of wool, their fate is too sad to tell.

Once my brother, who is a passionate lover of cats, was visiting us, and as soon as Tiny spied him she jumped on to his knee and began clawing unmercifully.

Then she got on to the back of his chair, and attacked his whiskers with a sort of savage joy.

At this stage the gentleman exclaimed, " Upon my word, this cat is no' canny ;" whereupon Tiny whisked out of the room in a sulky fit.

Whether she had been brooding over her fancied wrongs until a dark scheme of desertion took shape in her mind, or whether she had a broomstick appointment to keep with the other witches, I cannot tell, for unfortunately she never gave me much of her confidence, though I was first in her love.

But one dark wild winter night Tiny stole down the long stair, and out into the tempest-swept streets, and was seen no more for some weeks.

At the end of that time there was brought to me a starving, emaciated, subdued, skeleton of a cat, with just life enough in it to cry " mew " very piteously, and this creature was supposed to be my lost Tiny.

At the first glance I said, " This cannot be Tiny," but on hearing that name the poor animal crept up and claimed me, so I claimed her.

I washed her and fed her, and was very glad to have her back, and I soon found that her temper was entirely changed from what it had been; so much so that grave doubts continued to assail me regarding her identity.

A goldfinch was reigning in Chippy's stead, but the reformed cat never looked near it, and by degrees we became impressed with the fact that if we had got back Tiny's body, we certainly had not got back her spirit.

Some one who knows all about witches told me that probably the witch who had occupied Miss Tiny had gone off upon some adventure which did not require a cat's body, and therefore I might be allowed to keep the original cat, who was evidently a creature of very mild temper and inferior intellect.

To tell the truth, I liked Tiny's *uncanny* ways and *eerie* looks, and would rather have had her with the witch inside than as she was, with no more spirit than a chicken—a soft, purring, stupid animal, that could not, and would not, touch a mouse; whereas Tiny of old never allowed even the shadow of a mouse's tail to be seen in the house.

The sole peculiarity in which the cat now indulged was a passion for lily of the valley, and whenever I opened the windows she would creep out and chew the young plants that were coming up in boxes.

I punished her for this once, which frightened her so much that I guessed she had known what "hard lines" mean while away from us.

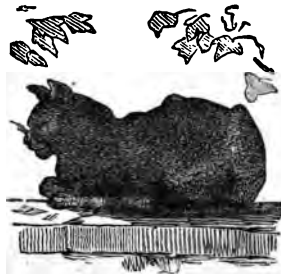
One evening I had opened the windows before leaving the room, but forgot to remove Tiny, and, coming abruptly back for that purpose, startled her in the very act of biting the flowers.

My exclamation terrified her, bringing memories of chastisement, and, forgetting her whereabouts, she bounded from the window-ledge, but went the wrong way—namely, *out*, instead of *in*.

I heard a thud, but no cry, and looking down saw the cat make off into a carpenter's shed. She had fallen down from a great height, but, cat-like, had come down all right.

I sent off a trusty messenger to find and claim the truant, but she had disappeared, and though I made many inquiries I never heard more of her, and she never came back.

I console myself with the universal belief of all who knew Tiny in her early days, that the Tiny which went out of the window was not the Tiny which came out of *C. C.*'s basket; and I think sometimes that my Witch-Cat will return to me a sadder and a wiser Tiny.





OUT IN THE SNOW.

XIII.

OUT IN THE SNOW.

I.

THE white, white snow,
It lies in the street,
Crisp and pleasant
Under the feet.
All on the housetops,
All on the ground,
It came and settled
With never a sound.

II.

“ Oh,” say the children,
“ The nice white snow,”
Children who have
Warm homes, you know ;
And “ Oh, it is pleasant
Out in the street,”
Say the children
With well-shod feet.

III.

But the children
Who have no home
Say, " It is cold
Now the snow is come."
The white, white snow
Looks dreary and sad
When little children
Are poorly clad.

IV.

Oh, children, dear,
Who have cozy beds
And cozy house-roofs
Over your heads,
And thick warm clothing,
And well-shod feet,
It is bitter for *some*
In the cold, cold street.



XIV.

TOMMY KITTEN.

CHILDREN, I wish you knew Tommy Kitten ; you would all love him, I am sure.

He is a round, plump, soft boy, with *no* corners anywhere about him, and his character is just like his body, for *it* is round, and plump, and soft, without corners, too.

He has never given any one a bit of trouble all his life.

He was the first bright thing that came into the house, after a time of great darkness, and people wondered if the new baby would learn the "trick of sadness" that had become the habit of the household.

He had pretty dark eyes, and a wistful look that was almost painfully sweet, when he was a baby ; and Aunties shook their heads, and said, "Ah ! he has caught the sadness too."

But Aunties were mistaken (as even Aunties can be sometimes), for though Tommy Kitten was the very quietest of babies, he was not the saddest. Though he did not laugh much, he never cried.

His usual mode of expression was a low rippling sound, something between a turtle dove's coo and a kitten's purr.

He never made a fuss about his teething, as so many

cornered babies do ; and no one knows how, or when, he learned to walk, and talk, and read.

These things seemed to come to him as leaves come upon a tree.

His face and hands never want so much washing as other boys' hands and faces.

His hair is always smooth, and so is his temper.

His jacket is always clean, and so is his conscience.

Tommy Kitten is the middle boy of five, and he is the one most loved by the others. Why is that, do you think? It is because he is the Peacemaker. The loving pupil of the eldest, the faithful friend of the next, the kind companion of the third, the protector and guide of the youngest. There is another reason why he is the favourite brother. He is the inventor of all the games, and the patient ingenious manufacturer of the toys. He begs for a few pins, corks, and feathers ; and from these he makes SUCH horses ! Here is the picture he made of one of his own steeds, also the work of his busy fingers—



Tommy Kitten knows how to utilise very simple materials, thereby setting an example to many older and wiser folk. He collects the empty matchboxes and old corks ; and, with the help of a few pins, he converts those otherwise useless articles into toy railway trucks ! Perhaps some of you would like to have such pretty inexpensive trucks, so I will tell you

how Tommy Kitten makes them. He cuts a cork into four slices, passes a pin through each slice, then through the corners of the matchbox, bending the point when through, so that it shall not return the way it came. Then he crooks a pin into each end of the box, like a little fish-hook ; and last of all paints the whole according to his fancy ; and then the trucks are ready to be linked together and sent off for luggage waiting at the next station !

There is another sort of toy which Tommy Kitten makes very beautifully, but then it requires a little of the sculptor's genius and skill to mould *them*, and as all little boys are not so gifted perhaps you could not succeed in that kind of work so well as with the trucks. Still you might TRY, and who knows how well you might succeed.

We never know what power we possess until we have tested ourselves.

Well ! Tommy Kitten gets a bit of soft bread-crumbs, and he kneads it, and rolls it, and presses and pinches it until it becomes like putty. Then he moulds it into animals, birds, and all sorts of things. They are really very life-like, and give great pleasure to the sculptor and his friends.

He is also very clever at making animals, trees, people, and furniture out of paper, but I can't tell you how he does it, for I see a bit of ragged newspaper twisting among the taper wee fingers, and by-and-by a rocking chair, or an elephant, or a baby, is lying in Tommy Kitten's hands as if it had come there by magic.

But, you know, this inventive gift of his would not make him popular among his brothers, if he employed it merely to gratify himself.

It is because he is so unselfish ; he gives the things he makes to others, and thus wins their hearts.

Often he will keep the younger boys amused for hours with his games and toys, when he would have preferred playing in a quiet corner by himself.

That is how I think one puts one's talents to the best purpose, and it brings rich reward in the love of many friends, and the approval of the Heavenly Father.

Tommy Kitten is always to be trusted, and he is always the little gentleman.

But I must admit that he has one sad failing, which gets the better of him at rare times ; but he is fighting it down, and will conquer it, I hope, soon, and then WHAT A BOY he will be ! Tommy Kitten is a shy, timid boy, rather, and he used to be very much afraid of being alone in the dark. Often he woke up in the night expecting the most impossible things to happen because the darkness had come.

He would fancy that a bear was under the bed—as if bears went about Scotland like bairns, making fools of themselves, and getting into the most uncomfortable places in the world.

He would imagine that a giant was coming down the chimney—as if giants would not much prefer walking in at the hall door.

In short, Tommy Kitten rather lost his wits when night came on.

At last his fear overcame his shyness, and he asked his mother if she thought Jesus would keep him from being frightened in the dark, if he asked Him very earnestly to do so.

Of course his mother knew that Jesus would do so if Tommy Kitten had faith to believe, and she told her little boy so. There was no disturbance heard in the nursery that night, and next morning Tommy Kitten's confident bright smile told what had happened.

He *had* waked in fear, and he *had* asked in faith, and the weakness *had* been removed, for Jesus had indeed stood by His timid, fearful lamb, and given it courage to overcome; and Tommy Kitten has never been afraid in the dark since then. But the prayer of faith did more than cure him of that failing.

It taught him how near the Saviour is to those who seek Him "in faith believing," and how sweet it is to turn to Him for help always, and to rest on Him and be comforted by Him.

Children! I wish you would all try what going to Jesus about *everything* is like. You would soon prove how much better it is to be living in close communion with the dear Christ, than in trusting to yourself or to earthly friends.

Now, I will tell you a little secret about Tommy Kitten; but you must not let him know that *you* know. This is it.

Hush ! say it in a wee whisper, for he might hear if we speak loud. He is very fond of dolls ! “ Oh ! the softie,” say the boys who scorn such feminine toys. No, boys, you are wrong there : Tommy Kitten is not a “ softie ” (as you will own when you hear the next thing about him), but he is what all really brave noble-minded men and boys are, he is tender-hearted ; and he has no sisters on earth, or girl friends, so he expends the love that would have been theirs upon the dolls.

Once a big boy in Tommy Kitten’s school did a mean wicked deed, and when the master questioned the others, some who knew the truth denied it rather than get into the *bad* graces of the big boy and his friends.

But some of the boys, and among them Tommy Kitten, felt how wicked it was to screen the wrong-doer by telling a lie, so they told the truth boldly, and Tommy Kitten’s gentle heart was made miserable for a long time afterwards by the bullying which he got from the big boy, who lost no opportunity of revenging himself upon those who had the moral courage to speak the truth, fearless of consequences. Now was that the action of a “ softie ? ”

I am not going to tell you how Tommy Kitten came by his queer name, for—I don’t know !

It certainly is not the name he got at his baptism. But it has turned out a very appropriate name, for he has a great many kittenish ways about him.

He plays odd innocent tricks in a silent way that is very

droll ; and he has a great deal of quiet pussy fun about him which makes us laugh very much.

When he was a tiny child of two years old, he was going to be taken a long way over the sea. He saw preparations for the voyage going on, and plenty of talk about it too ; but somehow he did not at all understand about the journey being performed *in* a ship.

In fact he had never seen a ship, and likely did not know what it was, so he said, "Tommy Titten can not go 'cause he 'ood 'poil his boots in the sea."

This amused his brothers so much that they often tell the story, and whenever any sea-going has to be done, Tommy Kitten is asked if he thinks his boots will stand it !

I could tell you a great many good things that this good boy has done, but it would take up too much time, and I only want to tell you such things as may be *of use* to you. Tommy Kitten knows that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and once he saved up all his pocket money until he could buy a bird as a birthday present for his mother, to console her for the loss of a dear loving goldfinch which had performed capital punishment upon itself.

Oh ! if you could have seen the boy's glad face and his mother's surprise and pleasure. She treasures that bird as she treasures few things besides, for she knows how much the unselfish child denied himself to give it to her.

When Tommy Kitten was seven years old, he had to go to a school to live. To be sure it was in the same town, and he

was to go home every Saturday ; still it was *going from home*, which is always a serious matter to men of that age.

I do not feel that I can dwell upon this trial, the sobs and tears which even a "man's" suit, instead of the little sailor's costume hitherto worn, could not banish. Mother and home were more than trousers and long jacket ! Ah ! poor Tommy Kitten ! It was his first trial, his first encounter with the stern realities of life, and it was very hard.

For many weeks the going back, after Saturday and Sunday spent at home, was a trial which cost him many tears ; until he was told that he was making the grief of parting much heavier for his mother.

At once he gathered all his fortitude and manhood to his aid, and stumped off each Monday morning without a tear, or sign of suffering, although there was a big lump in his throat, and a sore ache in his loving heart.

He has never disliked school-life, but is always happy at the pleasant home-like Institution, where the best of care is bestowed upon him ; but he feels the home-parting quite as much as at first, only he does not let it interfere with his duty.

He goes off weekly like a little hero nobly bearing his cross, as we pray God he may bear all the crosses of life until he exchanges them for the victor's crown.

Our good, good boy ! A blessing rests upon his placid brow ; and we trust his example may help other little boys to live the life which is well-pleasing in their Maker's sight, so that

it may be said of them, as it was said of the Holy Child who came to earth in infancy to be an example to children of all ages, "He grew in favour both with God and man."

Some little boys wish me to add here, that this story of Tommy Kitten was written years ago.

They want me to say that he is a big boy now, that he crosses the sea without any of his friends with him, and laughs about "spoiling his boots." That he has dropped his child name, and is now "Tom." That he has not a bit of "softness" about him, and has converted his fancy for dolls into an affection for girl-cousins.

But Tom who was Tommy Kitten is still the good boy.



XV.

NEW YEAR BLOSSOMS.

ON the heart of sleeping Nature
Lies the aged dying year,
While the Christmas heralds scatter
Snowy plumes upon his bier ;
And the days are darkly drear.
Yet on every leafless branchlet
Hangs a blossom from the skies ;
In each flake a face of beauty
Like a baby's image lies—
They are Angels in disguise !

They have come, we tell the children,
To proclaim a young New Year,
And to sing the Christmas carol
That our saddened spirits cheer
When the days are darkly drear.
In the weary time of winter
They come floating from the skies
To alight on leafless branches ;
And the children's artless eyes
Know them Angels in disguise.

XVI.

JOHNNIE FROST AND WEE CHARLIE.

ONE day when the flowers were all gone, and the trees had no leaves upon them, and Auntie liked to get as close to the fire as possible, wee Charlie went to the window and looked out. Then he saw a boy with a very funny face, dressed in a curly coat and curly knickbockers, and with very curly hair; and he kept dancing about as if he could not stand still upon any account. Well! this boy was singing to himself, and wee Charlie put his ear close to the window to hear what he was saying. This is what he said—

“ I run o'er the hills in a single night,
And I make them all so white, so white;
I kiss little children with my two lips,
And their poor noses get such blue tips;
And over the windows, all crost and crost,
I write my name, which is Johnnie Frost.”

Now wee Charlie was so pleased at the curly boy's song that he put his ear close to the window, and as soon as Johnnie saw that, he changed his tune and sang—

“ Oh, it is a nice, fine day,
Fine as any day can be ;
But I have not long to stay,—
Won't you come and play with me ? ”

Of course wee Charlie wished to do so at once, but thought to himself he had better ask leave first, and while he was asking Mamma, the North Wind came tumbling down the chimney, whistling and roaring, talking and singing all at once, so that one could scarcely understand a word that he said. But they listened carefully, and at last they heard—

• “ Good Mamma, good Mamma,
Think of what I tell ;
If Charlie wee goes out to play
With Master Johnnie Frost to-day,
Do wrap his nose up well.”

Then Mamma laughed so that Mr North Wind was quite affronted, and went up the chimney as oddly as he came down. But wee Charlie was not afraid about his nose, so he went out to look for Johnnie Frost, and called out—

“ Crispy, curly Johnnie Frost,
Here I've come to play ;
Do let me catch a hold of you
Before you run away.”

Then Johnnie laughed and pinched wee Charlie's cheeks gently so that they grew very rosy, and wee Charlie played

with Johnnie for a long time, and when he went in-doors, and Johnnie had gone away to Greenland, Auntie made pictures of the curly boy, and Auntie made rhymes about them, too—queer rhymes and queer stories about a queer person, but they amused some queer bairns.



"This is Johnnie Frost.



"This is just the way he passes
Over all the crackly grasses.



“This is how he breaks the glasses;
Naughty Johnnie Frost !



“ Look at Johnnie Frost !
O'er our windows he is creeping,
And at night, when we are sleeping,
Into every pane he's peeping ;
Funny Johnnie Frost.”

XVII.

*THE TOUCHING STORY OF THE
HUNGRY SCORIE.*

THIS is the story
Of little grey Scorie*—
“Plee, plee!”
The Scorie cried,
And away he hied
Over the sea.

His wings so long,
So broad and so strong,
Wide opened he;
And twice he gave
A dip in the wave,
Saying, “Plee, plee!”

The sun was so bright
And the water so light
It was pretty to see;
But the Scorie that day
Was too busy to play,
Saying, “Plee, plee!”

* Scorie, a young sea-gull.

" My father, my mother,
My sister, my brother,
 They flit o'er the sea ;
Be it calm, be it rough,
They catch fishes enough
 For breakfast and tea.

" My father, my mother,
My sister, my brother,
 Plee, plee !
They are eating so fast
That surely at last
 There'll be nothing for me."

And the whole long day
Did the Scorie say
 So hungrily,
" Ah ! how I wish
I could find a fish ;
 Plee, plee !"

Then his father, his mother,
His sister, his brother,
 They rose from the sea,
And they all said, " Come,
We are flying home."
 " Not I," said he.

And, poor little bird,
He never stirred
From over the sea,
Saying, " Ah ! how I wish
I could find a fish ;
Plee, plee ! "

Then the sky grew dull,
And a great black gull
Said, " Night is near ;
So if you wish
To find a fish
Make haste, my dear. "

So Scorie grew wise
And sharpened his eyes
And looked in the sea ;
And all in a row,
Swimming not very low,
Saw fishes three.

Down darted he,
Right down in the sea
So smooth and so still ;
Then off did he fly
With a gleam in his eye,
And a fish in his bill.

"O father, O mother,
O sister, O brother,
I'm happy," said he ;
"For I have my wish,—
I have found a fish ;
Plee! plee!"







XVIII.

AN OLD MAN AND A WEE BOY.

ONCE a little boy was very cold, so he went to the fire to warm himself. Silly fellow! he should not have done that—that is not good for wee boys; but he did not often think of what was good or bad for him. He went very close to the grate, so the wise fire said—

“Crackle! crackle! dearie me!
I am burning hot, you see,
Don’t you come too close to me.
Little boys should run and play
On a bitter frosty day,
That will keep the cold away.”

But the Wee Boy had been running about so much all the morning, that he was tired, and he said to the fire—

“O Pretty Flame, I am tired now,
So let me sit by you,
I like to see you dance about,
And look at what you do.”

Then the fire went crackle, crackle again, and called out quite in a roaring fiery tone—

“Don’t you call me Pretty Flame—
Burnie, Burnie is my name.”

So the Wee Boy ran away, because Burnie, Burnie seemed angry. Just then there was a noise at the door,—scratch, scratch—scratch, scratch,—and some one outside shouted—

“Bow-wow, bow-wow, I have something to say,
Open the door, little master, I pray.”

At that the Wee Boy ran across the room to open the door, and in walked his own little dog Chum. Chum walked in very quickly, pulling after him a very poor Old Man. Doggie held the corner of the Old Man’s long-tailed coat in his mouth, but he dropped that as soon as he had got the Old Man across the room, and then Chum said with quite a soft whine—

“Oh, his cheeks are so pale and his clothes are so thin,
Pray, dear little master, do let him come in.”

Then the Wee Boy said—

“Of course; come in, Old Man, come and sit in this cozy arm-chair.”

And the poor Old Man sat down and spread out his hands and warmed them, saying—

“Ah! that is nice.”

And the fire crackled quite cheerfully, for it was glad to warm the poor Old Man.

By-and-bye the Wee Boy said (remembering what the fire had told him)—

“Old man, you should run and jump and play,
That is the best on a frosty day.”

But the Old Man answered—

“Ah! little boy, I’m very old,
And cannot run and play like you,
And in my coat the wind so cold
Finds many a rent to whistle through.”

Then the fire flapped its wings, and the little flames flew up the chimney, singing—

“Crackle, Crackle, that’s my name
When the poor old men come near me,
Then I’m just a nice warm flame,
Crackle, Crackle is my name;
Crackle, Crackle—don’t you hear me?

“Burnie, Burnie is my name
When the little boys come nigh me;
Though I look a pretty flame,
Burnie, Burnie is my name;
Burnie, Burnie—don’t you try me.”

But Dog Chum had got tired by that time, so he pricked up his ears very knowingly at some food on the table, and then said to his little master—

“ Oh ! that food looks so nice,
Give the old man some meat,
And a bone, if you please,
Can be my little treat.”

At that the Wee Boy laughed very much, but he put all his lunch on the Old Man's plate, and the Old Man thanked him, and told him stories about the Snow and the North Wind,—and perhaps he is still telling the Wee Boy those strange wild stories, for I don't know what happened next ; only I am sure people *in books* always stay where they are !



XIX.

LITTLE MAID MARY'S ADVENTURE.

A DONKEY is not really an ass, and geese are very intelligent creatures.

As for the Laridæ, they are not at all gullable. But, I tell you, boys are the most stupid animals (in some respects) of any. Now, was it not very stupid of two young gentlemen to allow one little lady to walk—oh—ever so far in the dark ALONE?

I leave it for any sensible child to decide whether those boys were wiser than donkey, goose, or gull.

“But,” says a bright large-eyed mannikin, who is loyal to his fraternity, “why cannot a girl look after herself, as well as a boy? and did not the boys know that the girl had a guardian angel to keep her from harm?” Yes, Bright-eyes, that is all true and sage, no doubt: but the facts remain, that gentlemen are supposed to need looking after much less than ladies; and that angels are invisible!

So this little Maid Mary went on in the dark ALONE—very much afraid of what might happen, and much too proud to ask her thoughtless escort to see her safe home. That's just the

way men do—they go with you a part of the way, then they remember something they have left undone behind; or another path opens in another direction, and you are left to go on in the dark alone.

You see little Maid Mary was in the same position that most little Maid Maries are in often. The pride which prevented her from asking aid came to her from the high-born spirit of her chieftain sires; and the fear rose out of the imagination which belongs to the Highland blood or atmosphere.

And little Maid Mary was walking, you will please remember, through wild Highland paths, with mysterious woods not far off, and hills and moorland where *anything* might happen!

I do not think that the little Maid had read about Una and the Lion, or she would have known how youth and innocence are kept from harm; but she was intimately acquainted with Red-riding-Hood and the wolf; so went on without stopping.

There was sweet moonshine stealing out on the path in a very enticing way, tempting her to linger and admire it; and the trees and hillocks took curious shapes in the uncertain light, desirous of making her turn to hide under a hedge, and cry her life away.

But it was all in vain. The girlish heart fluttered with fear, like a wild fledgling that some rude schoolboy has drawn from its nest; yet the small feet stepped firmly along, and

the proud young face looked straight on and up—never down.

Very soon there came the sound of voices, and the bird-like heart, which had merely fluttered before, began to beat against the bars of its cage as if it must fly or die.

Then worldly wisdom came to little Maid Mary's aid.

"You have got a pretty locket kissing your neck, and when the dreadful robbers who are coming seize hold of you, just offer them *that*, and they will not hurt you : you know, the dear brother who gave the ornament would rather you lost *it* than that he lost *you*."

That was what worldly wisdom advised ; but the guardian angel, whose white wings were spread wide and low above little Maid Mary's fair hair, whispered—

"Don't you remember, my pet, that God is over all, and can keep you quite safe at any time and anywhere?"

Then the beating fearful heart grew stiller, and the tiny feet scarcely left their mark upon the miry way—so light is the step of hope—and the pale pretty face had a sunshine from within upon it which shamed the darkness.

Little Maid Mary never supposed that the voices could belong to a shepherd, or carter, or any other honest creature.

She was thinking of gypsies and banditti ; and how much a pair of dark enthusiastic eyes and a Spanish guitar had to do with the little lady's fancies, I cannot guess ; but perhaps you can.

"Oh ! if they would but take the locket—my dear darling

locket—and leave me!” she thought, as the voices came nearer.

“Oh! what will mother do, and Bright-eyes, and all, if little Maid Mary does not come home?” she thought, as her angel’s pinions drooped closer.

“Oh! what will become of me? and will my brothers have to pay all their money to buy me back?” she thought, as the darkness grew more dark.

“Oh! if they knew at home that I am out alone, and those dreadful men coming—coming—coming,” she thought, as the moonbeams went to bed behind a cloud.

“Don’t you remember, my pet, that God is over all?” repeated her guardian, once more bending so near that the velvet touch of his white wings brushed the little maiden’s cheek. Then she took courage once more, and went boldly forward to encounter the robbers, when suddenly, fear gave place to joy; the dreadful unknown proved to be ministering spirits which she knew well. She was met by friends from home; and when she went to rest that night—

“My little Maid Mary, be not afraid,
For Heaven is around you,” her angel said;
“And Heaven loves its little ones such as you,
Soft as the snow-flake, and pure as the dew.
Then fear not to tread on a dark, lone way,
With God over all, His Son for a stay;
The world that you know not is much the same
As that path in the darkness by which you came;

The fears that beset you will soon give place
To a trusting hope that is fruit of grace ;
And the foes you dread will be turned aside,
If you lean with love on your unseen Guide ;
He will guard the path where you chance to roam,
And will send forth His angels to lead you home."



XX.

NEP'S ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF.

NOW, good dogs all, both great and small, attend to
what I say ;

My eyes, you know, are growing dim, my coat is growing grey.
And when our eyes are growing dim, as scarce you need be
told ;

And when our coat is growing grey, then we are growing old

And when we're growing old, we care no more to jump and
run :

We like a quiet kennel best, or basking in the sun ;
And while we in our kennel doze, or in the sunshine bask,
We often think upon our lives, and take ourselves to task.

"Now was I not a foolish dog?" sometimes perhaps we say ;
Or "was I not a spiteful dog to snarl in that sad way?"
And then perhaps there comes a wish, but oh! the wish is
vain,—

"I'd be a better dog if I might just begin again."

To-day as I was lying thus upon the pleasant grass,
I heard the little bounding feet of happy children pass ;
And as they shouted in their play a laugh so gay and
glad,
A memory came back to me, which made my heart feel
sad.

I had a little master once, a baby-boy was he ;
When I was but a friendless pup, and he was good to me.
I shared my little master's food, I shared my master's play ;
And we were friends and playfellows the whole long happy
day.

Along the pleasant fields and hills we roved about together ;
Amongst the yellow buttercups, and through the soft sweet
heather :
Or I would shake my rough wet coat upon the smooth sea
sands,
And make my little master laugh and clap his tiny hands.

He always said good night to me before he went to bed,
And when the next day he awoke, " Good morning, Nep," he
said,
I was so happy in those days, those pleasant days gone by,
And we were friends—such right good friends !—my master
dear and I.

But oh! one day my master dear played with his little
brother;

Thought I, "I'm not his playmate now, for he has found
another;"

With that I gave a jealous snarl, an ugly snarl of spite,
And at the little baby-boys I flew with all my might.

Well, with that snarl my happy times came quickly to an end,
A spiteful jealous dog, they said, could be no trusty friend.
And through my long, long life I've wished—but wished alas!
in vain,

That that bad deed could be undone, and old times come
again.

For never more the fields and hills we roved about together,
Amongst the yellow buttercups, and through the soft sweet
heather;

And never more upon the shore we played beside the sea,
They parted us who were such friends, my master dear and me.

Now, good dogs all, both great and small, attend to what I've
told,

To grieve kind friends when you are young will grieve *you*
when you're old,

And most of all remember this—that wishing will be vain
To undo deeds that have been done, and bring days back
again.

XXI.

SNOW CAVES.

“THERE had been a heavy fall of snow. The walls which surrounded, and the hedges which crossed, the ‘Front-green’ had caused the snow to collect into such large drifts, that at last all the drifts had grown into one big drift which covered the whole enclosure. The snow was some feet deep, and firmly compacted, so that one could walk on the top without sinking over the shoes.

“The sun was shining, and there was a healthy feel in the air ; also the bairns were allowed to go out as much as they pleased.

“There were four of them, and they all came out for a regular day among the snow.

“Lalya and TO scampered about, pelting each other with snowballs ; but Tribby and Wildie were more sedate.

“They had a grand scheme in their heads.

“They meant to make a Snow Cave ; so as soon as the smaller couple were fully engrossed in their game, the older girls began their task, and, in a short time, the Cave had quite a promising appearance.

“The girls were very quiet at their work, and whenever

Lalya or TO chanced to approach that locality, the others would immediately feign to be tossing snow about aimlessly; and so contrived to prevent the little ones from seeing what a habitation was being created.

"The entrance to the Cave had been placed on that side of the drift which faced away from the house, and away from Lalya and TO, and it escaped observation.

"The girls did not wish to be bothered at their work, and they did not want to be imitated by the little ones, who, like older people, were fond of copying the work of others, and then receiving the credit bestowed upon original design.

"The Snow Cave was to be a great surprise.

"The couple set about their work quite scientifically, raising pillars for the support of the roof. These pillars were made from a portion of the snow which was being dug out. Then the walls and roof were pressed smooth and tight. Snow benches were arranged along the walls, and a snow table placed in the middle of the floor.

"The great undertaking was almost ended, when Slop (the dog-friend of the bairns) scented them out, and in his track came the little sister and brother.

"'Oh my! what a fine house!' exclaimed Lalya, never dreaming that she was not wanted there.

"'Why did you not tell us, and let us help?' asked small TO.

"'We don't need help,' replied Wildie shortly; and Tribby added in an aggrieved tone, 'you only spoil our fun.'

"TO, somewhat offended, marched off, followed by his faithful slave and ally.

"'It's a great shame not to let us play with them,' she said.

"' *We* could make a Cave too,' he affirmed.

"'We can try,' Lalya replied.

"So they crossed to the further side of the lawn, and set to work, and got on very well for a time. Unfortunately they had not observed the pillars in their sisters' Cave, and they also did not make their excavation so deep down in the snow as the more experienced Tribby and Wildie had done.

"Consequence. Lalya was on her knees burrowing energetically, while TO was mining also, after a fashion of his own, when down came the top of their Cave, covering Lalya up, and almost smothering TO.

"He struggled silently. She screamed her loudest, but they soon extricated themselves, and when they reappeared on the surface of the snow, their big brother, Dandie, was standing by laughing with all his might.

"He had been watching the proceedings of all four children for some time, and helped to shake the snow from Lalya's ears and TO's curls; but when he saw the rueful faces of the little ones, as they gazed upon the ruins of their Cave, Dandie's good nature got the better of his sense of fun, and he offered to make another Cave for them. 'A far finer one than theirs,' pointing contemptuously at Tribby and Wildie, who, having finished their job, were standing beside their

Cave, admiring its elegance and durability, and quite ready to allow any one who pleased to come and admire it also.

"The happiness of Lalya and TO was restored at once by Dandie's kind offer, and to work he went immediately ; *he* could do in a moment what the little couple took many moments to perform, and, before long, a large Cave was on the fair road to completion, yes, sure enough it was larger, stronger, finer than any Snow Cave which had ever been made on that Front-green.

"Lalya clapped her hands with delight, and TO called across to the others, 'This beats you,' which brought them to the spot at once.

"Alas! they were obliged to own that their Cave was nothing to the new one. It had more than one room, and the pillars were ornamented with impressions of the soles of Dandie's boots, printed artistically in the snow.

"A border of the same elegant device went round the walls, and as the boots had lately received a new set of nails, the print was clear and regular.

"The older children were envious, the younger triumphant.

"But Dandie could not long endure the dejected looks of his favourite sister, though she had deserved to be 'crowded over,' and when he had quite finished his task he took her hand. 'Come, Wildie, don't look so forlorn, let us see if I can't do something to improve your Cave also.'

"Dandie could do *anything*, she thought—anything great or grand that he chose to attempt ; so, filled with new hope,

Wildie led him to the other Cave, which he soon made to look as fine as its neighbour.

What a good-natured big brother he was! It was not wonderful that Wildie thought his pleasant boy-face the most beautiful face in the world.

“‘I have a splendid idea, bairns,’ he said after a time, when the rival Caves were raising some jealous words between the rival proprietors. “Suppose you all join together, having the Caves as joint property, and make Tunnels from one to the other, with other Caves and passages branching off? Work always gets on best when a lot work together, instead of one or two doing little bits in different places. I’ll do heaps to help you if you will agree, but not otherwise.’

“The whole four shouted their approval, and it was resolved that the new project should be entered upon at once, and carried on from day to day, until a perfect labyrinth should exist in the bosom of the Snow Wreaths.

“‘Always supposing that a thaw does not set in,’ said Dandie.

“But no thaw came for weeks, and during a great part of that time the bairns worked while daylight lasted, until their scheme became an accomplished fact.

“The big Tunnel was a wonderful success, being lighted from above by little windows.

“There were darker and smaller corridors branching off in all directions, and Caves many, and back entrances, and ‘escape holes,’ and dens.

"The whole Snow-drift was honey-combed like a rabbit warren, and whenever Papa appeared on the Front-green he was instantly warned to be careful where he walked, lest an inadvertent footstep might prove awkward to himself or an 'underground.'

"Oh, what fun it was, creeping along those Tunnels to pay each other visits! Slop became quite familiar with the subterranean settlement, and learned to creep along the galleries as cautiously as anybody.

"Then what novel games the new playground gave rise to!

"The bairns played at being rabbits and ferrets, and hunted each other from Tunnel to Tunnel.

"They were robbers hiding in mountain caverns. They were travellers losing their way in forest avenues. They were fish swimming among the rocks at the bottom of the sea.

"They were railways trains running under hills and streets.

"Dandie's splendid idea was a most wonderful success, and kept the bairns amused and employed through weeks of winter weather.

"Their interest in the Snow Caves abated a little as Yule time drew near, and the pleasures of that season, which is above all others the children's time, drew their thoughts to the fireside.

"On Yule Morning, the bairns were waked early by Dandie's cheerful voice, as he went up and down the house creating a general disturbance at an unearthly hour.

"He carried a 'branched candle,' which he had manufactured himself months before, and had stored for Yule Morning. How pretty it looked with all its little arms alight.

"The youngsters lost no time in dressing, and long before their elders were ready for them, they were congregated around the closed door of the Mother's Room.

"They were in a fever of expectancy.

"Lalya affirmed that she had heard Santa Claus on the roof the previous evening, and TO was certain that some stupendous revelation would follow their admission to their mother's chamber where Stockings had been hung the night before.

"At last the door opened, and they all rushed in helter skelter, first to Mamma's arms, who, although an invalid, was sitting up in bed, ready to receive them.

"Papa was in the easy chair by the fire, and close beside him the low nursery table stood spread for breakfast. Branched candles were lighted about the room, for the winter sun rises late in that land of the Snow King, and, moreover, it was not according to old custom to breakfast on Yule Morning by the light of day.

"Of course the first and greatest attraction was the Stockings stretched into fantastic shapes, and hanging in a row at the foot of the bed.

"The name of each child was written on a card pinned to each Stocking, and a shout was raised as the bairns claimed their own.

"What treasures came out of those Stockings! Toys, fruit, ribbons, books, sweets, pence. There seemed no end to the contents of those Stockings.

"The remarks made by the bairns were as varied as their Santa Claus presents, and their father noted each original speech for future delectation.

"Then how can I describe the breakfast which followed!

"It was like no other meal which was ever served at any other time in that house.

"Only on Yüle Morning did the bairns breakfast so in the Mother's Room.

"Only on Yüle Morning did the father take part in their meal.

"It was a banquet of fairyland.

"After that was over, Dandie went off to join other lads in the time-honoured Yüle Football Match; but first he had a short private game with Wildie, whose passion for boyish amusement was only second to her fear of ridicule.

"The morning passed so quickly in playing with the gifts of Santa Claus, that the bairns had not much time left for visiting the Snow settlement.

"A hurried peep into the Caves before night fell was all.

"In the evening Papa played the violin, and the bairns danced merrily for hours, while Mamma smiled on them from her old chair by the parlour fire. Their dreams that night were very queer, but on the whole delightful, and not unlike a rehearsal of what had happened on Yüle Day.

"And was it not good of the Thaw to delay all that time? It stayed away until after New Year, until all the Christmas gifts had become old, or used up, and life in the Snow Caves was also old, though not less charming.

"But every pleasure must end some day.

"Alas! why must snow melt and vanish?

"The sun came out, some gentle showers fell, and the frost-feel went out of the air.

"Days went by, and slowly at first, then more quickly, but always surely and invisibly, the Snow Wreaths grew less and less.

"The Caves began to drip, the Tunnels to fall in, and the whole structure vanished like a dream—like a Snow Dream."

And the story-teller sighed. "Was it a dream? did it never happen? and were they only dream-children too?" the little listeners asked.

"Ah no! they were real enough."

"Then what became of them all? they could not vanish with the snow."

The story-teller did not seem to hear that last question or remark, for her eyes were reading the fire, and the smile had left her lips.

"There *is* more about them," one shrewd child whispered, and another begged, "ah, tell us what became of them after all. You are telling it to the fire, so why not aloud to *us*?"

"If I were to tell you what happened afterwards to all

those bairns, it would fill volumes and volumes," she answered in a sad tone.

"Just one little, little bit about each then,—what became of Lalya?"

"She is the sympathetic friend of all children. She has a merry troop of her own, who celebrate Yüle, and make Snow Caves where their mother did the same things as a child!"

"And TO?"

"He is a wise Papa himself, and rules his sisters with a wand of love which he has exchanged for the rod of iron which he wielded when he was known as the Home-Benjamin."

"And Tribby?—don't say anything happened to any of them."

"No, if by that you mean death. No! they all grew up, and Tribby is now the dear Auntie of boys and girls beyond counting."

"That's nice!. Then of course they all have bairns of their own?"

"It is years ago since Dandie and Wildie carried their little ones to open Stockings, hanging on the foot of the same old bed in the same old room. I have seen their children playing together among the snow on that same Front-green, and *perhaps* some of those children are not far from me just now."

"Ah! who was Wildie? who was Dandie?"

"I would rather not tell you, dears. Enough for you to know that Wildie has long since ceased to bear a name sig-

nificant of youth, lightheartedness, and glee. And Dandie—much care has changed *his* bonnie bright face.”

The story-teller’s head sank a little, and she paused. Then in a low, low tone added—

“Enough for you to know that those bairns are all now scattered far and wide, as you may be, as the sisters and brothers of many homes are, but they look to be gathered together again—some day—an unbroken family—once—more.”



XXII.

BABY-LESSONS.

“ I ’M Grandmother’s beauty,
I’m Grandfather’s pet,
I’m Mother’s own darling,
The rest I forget—
Oh !—Dadda’s Miss Mischief,
The rest I can’t say.”

Well ! it matters not much so thou’rt God’s little May.

Now, Grandmother ? “spoils me,”
And Grandfather ? “plays,”
And Mother ? “takes care of me
Ever, always,”
And Dadda ? “he works for me—
More I can’t tell.”

Nay, it matters not much so that God loves thee well.

XXIII.

LITTLE HARRY'S PETITION.

I 'LL be so very good, Mamma,
I'll close each sleepy eye,
If you will only let your face
Upon my pillow lie;
Just there, that when the eyes are shut
I still may know you're nigh.

And let your Harry's cheek, Mamma,
Rest on your own dear hand,
And will you tell me "Gelert's Grave"
And the sweet "Better Land,"
About "Llewellen and his Heir,"
And then the "Golden Sand."

When others lay me down, Mamma,
They kiss me quite as much,
But still somehow I better love
To feel your tender touch.
And when you sing your pretty songs
Or tell me tales, it seems
As if throughout the livelong night
I heard them in my dreams.

When I was dressed for bed, Mamma,
And came to say "Good night,"
It looked so cozy in your room
The lamp was burning bright ;
I wished that I could stay awhile
And put my toys aright.

The books upon my shelf, Mamma,
Were lying to and fro,
But dear Papa makes his ones stand
Straight up and in a row ;
I thought if I could have remained
I would have put mine so.

But you were busy then, Mamma,
And bade me go away,
And so I thought I would not see
You any more to-day,
I did not cry—but oh, I longed
Once more "Good night" to say.

But by-and-bye I heard, Mamma,
A foot upon the stair,
And when I round the curtain peeped
My own Mamma was there ;
I felt so glad when on your lap
I knelt and said a prayer.

And after that, good kind Mamma,
You tucked me nicely round ;
So now I'll close those tiresome eyes
And sleep so fast and sound ;
But will you tell me first about
Llewellen and the hound.

See now I'm off to sleep, Mamma,
So fold me in your arm,
I sometimes dream that something bad
Comes near to do me harm ;
But if you sing a hymn to me
That will all evil charm.

You know, in fairy tales, Mamma,
How good sprites charm all ill ;
So if you'll let me feel you're near,
I'll sleep so soft and still.
Kiss me,—to morrow, dear Mamma,—
I'll—be—so—good—I—will.



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